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FORGERIES OF BABYLONIAN AND ASSYRIAN ANTIQUITIES.

[PLATE II.]

Through the cupidity excited by the rage for *bibelots*, fraud has to-day invaded all branches of art, to the great detriment of science. A skilled forger has sometimes lent his talent for a more or less ingenious mystification in which he himself was mystified, and in this case there is not much danger. We remember the story of a made-up plant, presented to Jussieu with the object of puzzling him; the learned botanist showed not the slightest surprise and, by simply analyzing the various elements that had been combined on the same stem, unveiled the innocent deception. This kind of joke passes all limits when it becomes the basis for speculation: it is then a crime, and, though followed by public reprobation and repressed by law, the difficulty of reaching the culprit allows this industry to increase and multiply. It must be confessed that archæology is much injured by this state of things, for, though it should interest only specialists, the general public always hear echoes of the facts. Everyone will remember that manufactory which inundated with false Moabite antiquities one of the most enlightened countries of Europe, and which succeeded for some time in deceiving the eyes of specialists. But the trade has its dangers,—witness the forger who paid with his life for an attempt at fraud for which legal redress could not, perhaps, have been obtained.

I.—Mention will be made only of the counterfeits of Assyro-Babylonian monuments: they have only begun, and I think it is time to nip them in the bud. The art of Assyria revealed itself in too striking a manner not to tempt the forger. As soon as the explorations at Nineveh attracted public attention, the forgeries began, though at first but timidly and on a small scale. Besides, the value of such objects was as yet too little known to make it profitable to imitate things that would not have

a certain sale: it was far more advantageous to the marauders to steal from the excavations, than to imitate.¹

Gradually forgery took the proportions of a regular commerce. At Baghdad it is the Jews who give themselves up to this industry, in which medals are the favorite objects, as Assyrian antiquities are too difficult a branch. As it is not so easy to manufacture a Khorsabad bull and put him in circulation, smaller objects, such as inscriptions, statuettes, and engraved stones are chosen. I remember having heard, a short time after the return of the French expedition to Mesopotamia, of a plan of Babylon engraved on a stone coming from the quarries of Montmartre! What has become of this marvel?

I have seen a collection of casts, Assyro-Babylonian terracotta prisms, which a dealer wished to dispose of by adding a certain number of genuine antiquities.² The discoveries of M. de Sarzec have again called attention to Babylonia, and the favor enjoyed recently by the engraved cylinders leads to their manufacture. I would like to forewarn against these productions and indicate their characteristics. If the amateur is at all familiar with the genuine objects in our Museums he can hardly be deceived, but all are not within reach of the Louvre or the British Museum, and they are more or less at the mercy of speculators when their taste is not sufficiently enlightened.

The subject is not a sufficient criterion by which to recognize a forgery. At all times an artist may be inspired by an idea that has already been, or will be, realized by others, but he remains a child of his generation, of his environment, of his instruments and material, so that his workmanship differs according to time and place. There are certain conditions from which neither the ancient artist nor the modern forger can free themselves, and they entail certain characteristics in the execution which can be discovered by close observation, thus infallibly disclosing the most skilfully-executed forgery.

II.—Forgery has its history: perfection is not reached at once, but follows the steps of the science that enlightens it as to the nature of the objects it wishes to imitate and the processes it must employ. At first

¹ How strange that, for more than thirty years, basreliefs from the mounds of Khorsabad and Nimrûd are lying, abandoned, at the bottom of the Euphrates, a few miles from Bassora, and that no attempt has been made to raise them.

² M. CLERMONT-GANNEAU calls attention to a false bilingual inscription with Moabite letters imitated from the stele of Mesha, and cuneiform characters imitated from inscriptions on bricks from Babylon: *Les fraudes archéologiques en Palestine*, p. 61.

timid and clumsy, the forger produces a work that bears merely a general resemblance to the original, but, as science makes progress, he also perfects his work and puts it in circulation ; still as, on the one hand, he is always, happily, quite a distance behind science, and, on the other, cannot entirely rid himself of familiar habits, he shows the cloven hoof in details the meaning of which he is quite ignorant of. Before reaching imitations of Assyro-Babylonian monuments it will be best to speak of Persian forgeries, especially as we here find forgery in its earliest stage.

At Teheran the Sassanid engraved stones have long been systematically imitated. The types of the Sapers and the Ardeshirs have been exploited with a skill so remarkable as to deceive the most practised eye. These works would not come within the limits of this inquiry



FIG. 1.



FIG. 2.

were it not that it has often been attempted to pass them off for portraits of Achæmenid princes, with the help of cuneiform inscriptions. The first two examples (*figs. 1, 2*) are chosen from the collection of the Comte A. de Gobineau, which he published in his treatise on cuneiform writings.³ His collection has been sold and I am ignorant of the present owner. The material of these intaglios is, apparently, a carnelian: the work, quite modern in appearance, seems to have been executed hastily, though the engraver was fond of details. The two figures are of a type resembling that of the princes of the time of the Sophis. Although certain technical details show the hand of the mod-

³ *Traité des écritures cunéiformes*, t. I, pp. 198, 327. In view of M. de Gobineau's notions about cuneiform writing, it is hardly to be wondered at that he fell into this error.

ern workmen, the intaglios might have circulated as portraits of Arde-shirs and Saptors had it not been that the forger engraved around each figure, on the obverse, an inscription in cuneiform characters in which he stands convicted. It is evident that the heads were arranged with the premeditated intention of leaving room for an inscription. On the other hand, the inscription is engraved with sufficient knowledge of the progress made in the study of the characters of the first column of Persepolis⁴ to deceive for a moment. They are Persian characters, more or less regular, which are the basis for attributing these works to the Achæmenian period. The engraved stones of this period are rare; I know of but four cylinders with Persian characters.⁵ Our two intaglios, therefore, were they genuine, would be of the utmost rarity; but any illusion, which there may be, disappears on a study of the Persian monuments, for we there find figures of a clearly defined type, completely different from those on our intaglios. The portraits of Achæmenid princes have to-day become classic, as well as the type of the figures of this period. They are found at Persepolis, Naksh-i-Rûstam, Bisitoun, and even on a quantity of anonymous cut-stones where we see a Persian ruler fighting lions or chimeras. On the other hand, the figures before us bring to mind the types of the Sophis. Without going any further, this would be sufficient to prove the deception, but it is interesting to prove it to the end.

In examining the inscriptions that accompany these two figures, we find that the wedge is correctly shaped, with dove-tailed head and wedge-shaped body, as in the Persepolitan inscriptions, but they are not properly combined, being without that elegance which caused the large inscriptions to be taken for architectural decoration. The signs have the awkward aspect of first copies, like those of the early travellers, Flower, Chardin and Le Bruyn, which is hardly perceptible in Niebuhr and Ker-Porter, and disappears in Texier and Coste and Flan-

⁴ At Persepolis the cuneiform inscriptions consist of three tablets or three columns which reproduce the same text in three different languages, the Persian, the Median, and the Assyrian. In each of these tablets the wedge which has given its name to the cuneiform writing is differently combined. The first column is written in Persian characters that can easily be deciphered. The reader is referred, for the rest, to the works of Burnouf, Lassen, Rawlinson and other more recent writers who have occupied themselves with the reading of these texts.

⁵ These are: (1) the seal of Darius, in the British Museum; (2) the seal of Arsaces, in the same Collection; (3) the seal of the woman Ksarasi at Brussels (*Musée des Armures*); and (4) the seal of Nandakhiya, in the British Museum.

din. On *fig. 1* we read the name *Vasdasba*, probably for Hystaspes, notwithstanding its peculiar form, for at Persepolis and elsewhere it is written *Vistaspa*. The change of *p* into *b* and of *t* into *d* can be explained by a faulty pronunciation :⁶ it shows in the forger a sufficient acquaintance with the Persian alphabet to make this substitution and to use the character *v* in the form accompanied by the vowel *a* instead of the ordinary one with *i*. In this way a general resemblance of pronunciation was preserved.

On the second intaglio (*fig. 2*) the inscription is well executed and more complicated, but in a style similar to the preceding. It also contains the name Hystaspes, here written *Visdaspya*, incorrectly, of course, as it is placed in the genitive, and as the correct form of this case would be *Vistaspahija*. The only anomaly here, is the change of the dental, the *v* conforming to the Achæmenid spelling. This genitive case requires, after it, the complement *Putra* (son), which is here understood : here the name is preceded by three characters, to be read *D. r. h.*, rather incorrectly traced, but suggesting the name Darius, although the form is not like that of the texts.

These two intaglios are, therefore, forgeries ; they were probably executed after a knowledge of Persian writing had led to the decipherment of the Achæmenid texts—even after the mechanism of the Persian alphabet had been disclosed by Burnouf, Lassen and Rawlinson, and translations of the Median text had been published by Westergaard and Norris (1853).

III.—The next example to be noticed is a curious specimen of another kind belonging to M. de B * * *. It is cut in a hard black stone, either marble or basalt, and consists of two parallelipeds of unequal size placed so as to form two steps of a small staged pyramid 285 mm. high. The faces of the lower block are slightly trapezoidal, and all four sides are covered with cuneiform inscriptions framed in an ornamentation of square lines, each line of writing being separated by a stroke. At each corner of the lower story is a kneeling figure with long beard and folded arms (*fig. 3*). It is easy to see that this object was imitated from the upper part of Shalmaneser's obelisk, found by Layard at Nimrûd, which is also of basalt or black marble, and that it cannot antedate the time when this became famous (1850).⁷ The imitation extends even to the framework

⁶ Still, this spelling accords precisely with the requirements of the 2nd column texts.

⁷ Sir HENRY RAWLINSON published a translation of it in the *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society* of London, vol. XII, part 2, p. 432.

of the inscriptions, which resembles that surrounding the basreliefs on the obelisk. The kneeling figures seem to be rude imitations of the genii, adoring the sacred tree, that we meet in Assyrian reliefs. The forgery is very apparent from the inscriptions, which are not nearly so well executed as those of the preceding intaglios. The forger wished to copy the Assyrian inscription, but, after starting with well-formed wedges, he got weary of the work, and fell first into the Persepolitan form, with which he was doubtless far more familiar, and then ended by producing simple scratches. The Assyrian groups were more complicated and difficult, so that the mistakes are numerous, and here and there a Persian character appears: the engraver had, evidently, but crude notions as to cuneiform writing.⁸

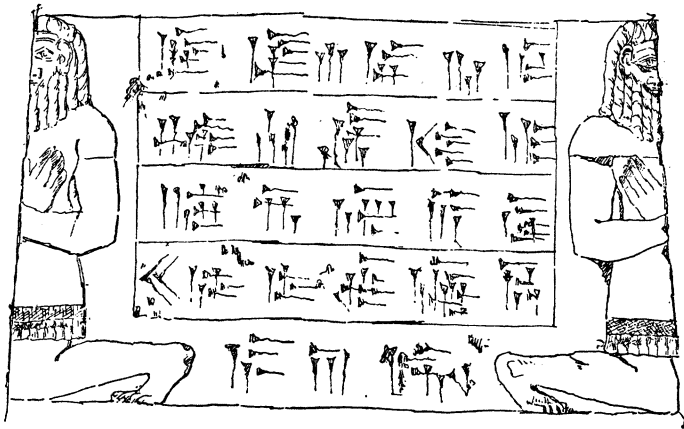


FIG. 3.

IV.—Of style and origin similar to the basalt pyramid is a pentagonal prism belonging to M. D * * * who purchased it in a lot of antiquities not belonging to Assyria, and has allowed me to publish it (*fig. 4*). This prism is 30 cent. high and 10 cent. in diameter, and is cut in a soft black stone, hollowed out so as to leave a thickness of but one centimetre. All genuine Assyrian prisms are in terracotta, and none bear figures or are made of basalt.⁹ The prism here illustrated contains subjects on three of its sides, and inscriptions on the other two. To begin with the

⁸To facilitate the sale of this forgery it was made the pedestal of an apparently genuine magnificent Chinese elephant, of bronze, in war costume.

⁹*Cf.* the prisms of Tuklat-pal-asar I, of Sennacherib and Assur-bani-pal, at the British Museum.

figures, we see in the centre the sacred tree, in one of the many forms in which it is found on the Assyrian basreliefs, and above it a line of inscription. To the left is a tall bearded figure wearing a conical tiara, with his hand resting on a sword, while above him is the crescent of the moon, the symbol of the god Sin. On the other side is a figure, somewhat similar, but without the tiara, above whose head is the winged disk,

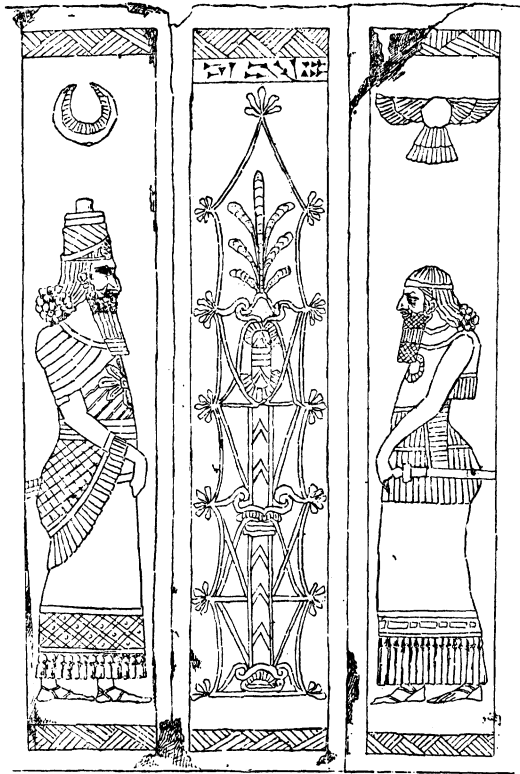


FIG. 4.

the symbol of the national god Aššur. The forger evidently imitated the basreliefs of Nimrūd. The type of the sacred tree is that so often carved with a kneeling or standing genius on either side, the main difference being that the flowers have five instead of seven petals. It is easy to see, in the first figure, an imitation of the well-known figure of Aššur-nazir-pal, and, in the second, that of one of his officers, though the details, as the sun on the king's breast, sufficiently betray the forgery. In

the inscriptions on the remaining two faces of the prism, we can note the progress made since previous specimens, and how the forger had followed the progress of knowledge. The signs are quite correctly and faithfully copied from some Nimrūd inscriptions, but the words are taken at hap-hazard, and form no connected sense. We read, here and there, such words as *rabuti*, *udannina*, *kisatim*. Unaware of the fact that words should never be divided at the end of the line, the forger ends his inscription with *a-na za . . .*, evidently taken from the closing formula of the royal inscriptions (*a-na za-at yumi rukuti*) in which the kings besought of their successors to protect their palace. The execution, also, of this work is contrary to that of any Assyrian work, and evidently possesses the same qualities (entire absence of relief, and rudeness of outline) as those shown by the workman who manufactured the work in basalt previously described.

V.—To the same manufactory I would attribute a large cylinder an impression of which was given me by M. D * * *, though I have not seen the original. It is probably made of very soft gypsum (h. 8 cent., diam. 45 mill.), and its surface bears a subject and an inscription, while a head in profile is cut on each base (*fig. 5*). The figure is that of an Assyrian priest with double wings, tiara with single horn, basket in one hand, and what was intended for a pomegranate in the other. It is an imitation of the figure often seen, in the basreliefs of Nimrūd, in adoration before the sacred tree, but the nude parts, especially, are badly imitated, not having the well-known conventional expression of the original. The inscription shows what this original was, for, notwithstanding some mistakes, it is easy to read: "Palace of Aššur-nazir-pal, King of Aššur, son of Tuklath-Adar, King of Aššur:" it is the genealogy of the famous founder of Kalah, as found in all his inscriptions.¹⁰ A comparison of the border with the ends of the branches of the sacred tree in the basalt prism (*fig. 4*), both ending in a five-petaled flower, shows that both works were produced by the same hand. Finally, the heads (*fig. 6*) on the ends are but rude, modernized copies of the well-known beardless eunuchs of the basreliefs, and would be sufficient to stamp the work as a forgery.

VI.—Although the frauds noticed above seem to be connected with

¹⁰ A certain acquaintance with the Assyrian language on the part of the forger is evinced by the fact that, after reading the first line, the cylinder must be turned around to read the last two.

a regular industry, the taste for such things was then too small to ensure much circulation. But this general ignorance with regard to ancient Oriental antiquities had its advantages for the forger. In counterfeiting classical antiquities so well-known and appreciated, great skill is required in order to deceive, but this is not required in imitating the antiquities of Western Asia, in which a rude fraud generally passes with most amateurs, who mentally substitute in these cases the term *barbarous*



FIG. 5.



FIG. 7.



FIG. 6.

for *antique*. Lately, the trade in Assyro-Babylonian imitations has for this reason taken large proportions, and they sometimes even reach America, when they are not stopped on the way by some inexperienced European amateur. They consist either of cameos or of bas-reliefs and statuettes; all having common characteristics which point to a single manufactory, which I could mention. There are two lots that I will here describe, one belonging to an enlightened collector, who was not victimized but purchased them in order to stop the circulation of these

objects; the other, consisting of pieces now in America, on which my opinion has been asked: the origin and nature of both is the same, though they come from different sources.

I shall commence with the counterfeit cameos: they are quite attractive, being cut in a soft greenish, semi-translucid stone¹¹ between four and six centimetres in diameter. The example given in *fig. 7* is sufficient to show the character of the series, and is of the original size: it contains a half-figure with a long beard and head in profile, wearing a rich cap and a necklace, while in the field there is a cuneiform inscription. Although a cameo, and not an intaglio, a great resemblance is apparent to the two heads first mentioned (*figs. 1, 2*) which passed for Darius and Hystaspes. On account of his unsuccess in the line of Achæmenid work, the forger changed his plans, making use of the same types, but changing the process for the easier method of working in relief, and giving an Assyro-Chaldæan air to his productions by the imitation of early inscriptions. The characters seem at first well drawn, and the wedge well shaped, recalling the archaic Babylonian writing:¹² the ideogram for god is especially successful. A close examination, however, shows that most of the characters are mutilated, and that the whole makes no sense: so we are unable to find out with what Chaldæan name the artist wished to dub his Persian monarch. I have seen quite a number of the cameos representing apocryphal sovereigns of the same family. What has become of them I do not know, but their type was almost identical, and the inscriptions included the same signs and the same mistakes, so that they are easily recognized.

But the forger became ambitious to go beyond the simple head, and I remember having seen, on some of these pseudo-cameos, entire figures, adoration-scenes, allusions to well-known myths. I especially recall a man-fish, who seemed to personify Ea-Oannes, whose figure is found at Khorsabad and on seals, but it also reminded one of Jonah and the whale: the human figure was issuing from the jaws of an enormous fish! The head of this figure, with its short hair and pointed beard, impressed me, and we shall meet it again later on.

The second series of forged monuments to which I must refer is composed of small bas-reliefs of gypsum, a sort of alabaster, somewhat oily

¹¹ A sort of *péridot* or crysolith.

¹² It is hardly necessary to remark that Assyro-Babylonian writing is of two distinct types, usually distinguished as *modern* and *archaic*: the former resembles that of the second Persepolitan column; the latter is more complicated.

in texture and very easy to work. These carvings are executed on tablets varying in size from a square decimeter to a length of thirty centimetres, and the scenes represented are sometimes very elaborate. Having seen quite a number of these objects, I am able to give their general characteristics. The figures are of several types; some are bare-headed, others wear a characteristic ornate cap; some are robed in a long close-fitting robe, others in a short tunic stopping above the knee. These personages are grouped in processions, adoration-scenes, and other scenes purely fantastic; in the field there often are monuments, altars, towers, and various accessories which are meant for symbols. On all

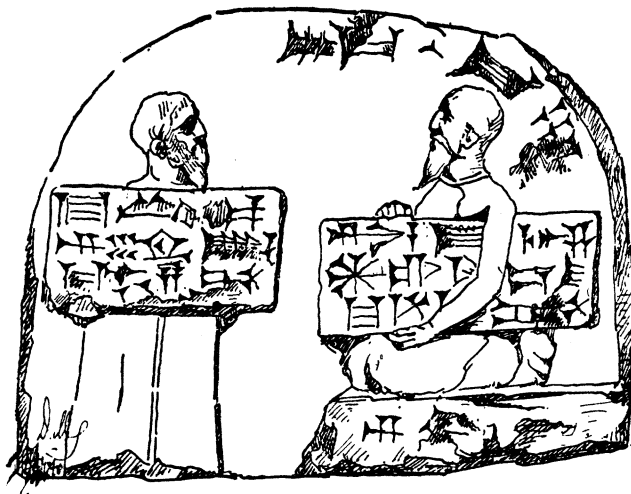


FIG. 8.

these bas-reliefs there are inscriptions of more or less length: their type—the archaic Babylonian—has already been given on the pseudo-cameo. The technic is in general very poor, and the figures are badly drawn: by the side of a well-studied head and some careful detail in costume we meet with faults that would be incomprehensible if they were not intentional.

The subject reproduced in *fig. 8* represents two figures, one seated and the other standing, both carrying a tablet inscribed with three lines of cuneiform writing. Comparing these figures with those in PL. II-4, one for the costume and the other for the pose, and with PL. II-5 for the type, the relationship of them all is quite obvious. If a further

comparison is made between the head on our cameo (*fig. 7*) and that of the seated figure in PL. II-4, the resemblance is so striking that there can be no hesitation in connecting all these basreliefs with the manufacture of the cameos in *péridot* mentioned above. Before passing to another subject, it is well to notice that neither the Babylonians nor the Assyrians ever gave to their figures the position occupied by this seated figure, which shows how fully the forger is under the influence of the habits of modern Persia.

Passing to a description of the scenes on the tablets illustrated on PL. II. ; No. 3 represents an adoration-scene before an altar, badly imitated from a Babylonian cylinder. The sort of standard in No. 1 is repeated, I remember, on quite a number of specimens that I have seen, and has thus become very characteristic. In No. 4 a dependent seems to be offering gifts to a king. The subject in No. 5 seems to have been a favorite one with the forgers, as I have seen a number similar to it. In all these different scenes there is a reminiscence of so many confused elements that it is difficult to decide on the principal source, though there seem to be echoes of the Telloh monuments, and an evident desire to imitate, in the inscriptions, the archaic texts.



FIG. 9.

I will mention here (*fig. 9*) a grotesque subject which shows the audacity of the forger and his reliance on public credulity. It represents an adoration-scene in which a boar or some such animal is being worshipped: this filthy animal rests on an altar, and before him stands an adorer. I know of an analogous scene quite frequently given on Babylonian cylinders, in which a dog is placed on the altar: this scene is quite authentic, as I have found an impression of it on a contract dated from the 26th year of Nebuchadnezzar.¹³ It is probably this scene that inspired the fancy of the artist. Did the forger push still further his audacity? It would seem so, as he manufactured isolated images of

¹³ *Glyptique orientale*, vol. II, pp. 134, 135.

this unclean pachyderm. I have seen a number of examples like that illustrated in *fig. 10*, to which it is unnecessary to add any comment.

Inscriptions are very numerous on these small basreliefs: in fact, every available part is covered with inscriptions in the most incoherent manner—on a tablet, in the field, on the edge, or on the garments of the figures. These peculiarities are seen on genuine monuments, but not arranged hap-hazard. As for reading these inscriptions, it is impossible; for, though a certain amount of skill is shown in imitating the shape of the characters, they are generally incomplete and fantastically combined. Although care is taken often to vary the arrangement, so as to pretend them to be different, the same characters, correct and incomplete, are

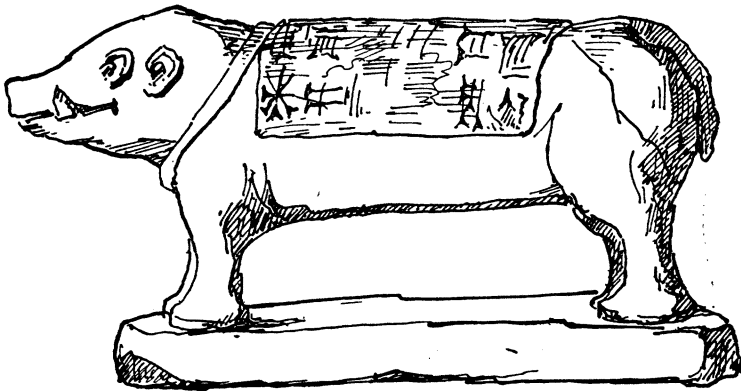


FIG. 10.

repeated everywhere, so that the same inscription practically reappears on all the basreliefs and cameos. This is another proof that all come from the same manufactory, but even surer proof than this can be given.

The forgers have also manufactured statuettes, very rudely executed. Some recall the innumerable nude figurines of Beltis, standing or seated, some isolated, some bearing a child. Several, however, are of a different type, like the one given on PL. II. It is hardly necessary to prove that there is nothing Babylonian either in the pose or in the costume of these figures. In the archaic characters engraved on them we recognize the same signs already noticed above; and this is sufficient to attach them to the same manufactory.

VII.—Where do these works come from? In the autumn of 1883, a friend of mine, M. de C * * *, received from Baghdad specimens of

these peculiar productions, and showed them to me. There were some cameos in *péridot* and some basreliefs, among others those which he retained and consented to have me publish here. His correspondent said that he had received them from an Arab who had found them on the site of Babylon. I had grave doubts as to their authenticity; the cameos brought to my mind the so-called intaglios of Darius and Hystaspes, and I could not succeed in reading a single word of the inscriptions, though this might not be considered a sufficient motive for suspicion, as many non-Assyrian languages use cuneiform characters. I advised an inquiry into the place and circumstance of the discovery, before purchasing. M. de C*** therefore wrote to his correspondent. The answer was long in coming: no information could be obtained.

In the meantime, I learned that a collection of analogous objects was on sale in Paris. On examining it, I found it to be composed of cameos in *péridot* and alabaster basreliefs similar to the specimens here illustrated—with the same figures, and the same inscriptions. The astonishing number of these objects was in itself sufficient to convince me. When I wished to see this collection again, it had disappeared.

During May 1885 I had the pleasure of meeting in Paris Dr. Wm. Hayes Ward who had just travelled through Babylonia. I presented him to my friend and showed him the famous specimens which he had kept. Dr. Ward at once told me that he had seen similar objects in Babylonia, and informed me of what he had learned. A dealer in Baghdad had offered him some basreliefs: as they seemed suspicious, he refused them and heard nothing further. Some time after, he went to Kerbella where a Persian showed him five or six analogous objects. Dr. Ward again refused, remarking that they were evident frauds, a fact which the Persian did not deny. Somewhat later a person in Baghdad offered to take him to a dealer who had Babylonian antiquities. Suspecting nothing, he went, and had offered to him a dozen small basreliefs in alabaster like the previous ones he had rejected; also 15 or 20 cameos in green stone. Dr. Ward upbraided his introducer for making him lose valuable time on such evident forgeries, and the accomplices, while admitting the charge, refused to disclose the origin of this merchandise. At last, however, Dr. Ward learned, from credible persons at Baghdad, that all these objects were manufactured by a family of Persians established at Kerbella. This, then, is the *officina* which produces all the forgeries we have noticed, and its activity is evident from the great number of objects in circulation. Amateurs should be on their guard.

From this source evidently come also the objects represented on PLATE II, which were brought to New York, during the summer of 1884, by M. M * * * who had lived at Baghdad for more than a year. He related having got them from a Kurd, in exchange for a mule!

VIII.—Seal-cylinders must also have tempted forgers, but, being difficult to manufacture, this branch cannot have been very lucrative. The price brought recently in Paris by some fine Babylonian cylinders was below the cost of a modern forgery, and the price asked by the *Sakkars*¹⁴ for the seals which they find in their excavations prevents the possibility of thinking of manufacturing them for fraudulent purposes. It is only of late that much importance has been attached to



FIG. 11.

cylinders and their price raised. I have probably contributed to this rise by calling attention to these monuments, but even now the price is not sufficiently remunerative: still there have been some attempts, and I will give (*fig. 11*) a curious example communicated to me by M. de C * * *. A glance will show that it belongs to the same manufactory, but a few details will prove it better. In the first place, it is cut in the same stone as the bas-reliefs: it is of a soft, moist and soapy texture which lends itself easily to the graving tool. Its surface is adorned with a scene accompanied by an inscription. A seated figure bears a sort of standard, while before it stands a worshipper: further on a goat rises on its hind legs and turns its head toward the figures. The general effect of animal, figures and inscription is similar to that of genuine Babylonian cylinders, but the forgery betrays itself in every detail. The seated figure wears the well-known cap, and bears the standard of the

¹⁴The *Sakkars* are the men who dig out bricks from ancient Babylonian buildings to sell them for use in modern constructions.

basreliefs. The profile, headdress and beard of the standing figure have the same resemblance: the symbols in the field are also arranged in a way not known in genuine symbols. The forger, though he tried to free himself from the conventionality shown in his basreliefs, did not fully succeed. Great skill is shown in the inscription. The forger evidently had made a careful study of the cylinders, for he knew that the inscription should be engraved in inverse order, that the first line should have a proper name, the second the ideogram of filiation, the third a divine name—all of which are found here, but evidently copied from the incorrect inscriptions of the basreliefs, a fact which attaches it with certainty to the manufactory at Kerbella. The skill shown is a proof that this was by no means a first trial, and that many similar works are probably in existence, and the forger, if these lines come under his eyes, will at least be forced to change his type.

There is one disadvantage in disclosing forgeries and showing how to detect them; for the forger himself learns a lesson. Besides, the illusions of many an amateur, of many a collector, are rudely disturbed: they would far rather preserve these illusions than become acquainted with the truth. But the true savant has a secret which prevents him from falling a prey to forgers. He avoids, as far as possible, all dealers. His collections are not picked up here and there at hap-hazard, but are, if possible, collected directly or by reliable descent from the results of excavations and according to a well-arranged and scientific plan. If he meets with forgeries he stops them on the way and exposes them. It is the unreasoning admirer of *bibelots*, who causes this confusion in the archæological and artistic market, and for whom the forger prepares his wares.

IX.—The forgery of seal-cylinders was comparatively easy in soft stones, but wellnigh impossible in *pietra dura*, for various reasons. In the first place, beginning with the royal cylinders, no forger could hope to counterfeit these with success, as he would have to be a specialist in Oriental history. Then, in ordinary cylinders, the favorites are those cut in jasper, porphyry, hematite, rock-crystal, and the different varieties of onyx, chalcedony, carnelian, and other gems: beauty of execution as well as of material is also sought for—two conditions the modern forger cannot fulfil. He can only imitate the rudest of early Babylonian seals, which have, for this very reason, been suspected by collectors. But the forgeries are of so rudimentary a workmanship that it is impossible to be mistaken in them. They are all cut in soft materials of dif-

ferent kinds—some even pressed in a kind of mastic covered with a black varnish. They are covered with curious figures, and with inscriptions in which the cuneiform element can hardly be recognized. The forger will certainly be tempted to improve his work, if the rise in price of the article promises any remuneration.

Finally, by a curious contrast, after suspecting the authenticity of a seal because it was of mediocre workmanship and engraved on a common stone, others have been suspected because the material appeared too fine and the subject too well executed. It was not thought possible that at so early a date (more than thirty centuries before our era) the Babylonians knew how to cut so skilfully rock-crystal, amethyst and chalcedonies of all shades. It was conjectured that these fine cylinders were ancient copies,¹⁵ an improbable hypothesis which I have elsewhere refuted (*Glypt. orient.* I, p. 142).

What I have said of cylinders is also applicable to cones, pyramids, and to all flat seals of any form whatsoever, with this difference, that forgery is relatively easier. These seals came into use, in the place of the seal-cylinders, toward the VIII century B. C., and the use continued through a long period, as we find them at the time of the Seleucidae and Sassanidae. The types of this period are well known, especially the beautiful intaglios of the Arsacidae and the coins of the Ardeshir, and in this field the forger can use his skill with profit.

The forger is also familiar with the trick of taking a genuine work and increasing its market value by adding a subject or a detail, skilfully combined on scientific data. These frauds are the most dangerous and difficult to detect.

X.—The engraved stones of Western Asia have not, however, been the cause of nearly so numerous and deplorable forgeries as those that have afflicted Greco-Roman glyptics, and the works of the Renaissance. Recent discoveries have brought to light so much that is unforeseen that it is often difficult to have an opinion on an object whose type appears for the first time. It is instantly considered doubtful, and depreciates in value. I know of bronzes which have been, in this way, sold for a song: monuments on which a mental reservation was made, which have not remained in France, but were received abroad with a readiness justified by the results.

Before bringing these remarks to a close, mention should be made of a kind of forgery on which it is often very embarrassing to give an opin-

¹⁵ FR. LENORMANT, *La Langue primitive de la Chaldée*, p. 387.

ion : I mean *ancient forgeries*, which have their value and should be accepted as such. All the productions of Phœnician art should be classified in this category, for this art is a permanent forgery, in accord with the character of this trade-loving and roving people without originality. In their religion, for example, nothing was spontaneous but the desire to follow some worship : it is composed of confused notions gathered by traders at the different ports where they stopped. The images of their gods were inspired by these recollections, and executed after types borrowed, according to circumstances, from Assyria, Asia Minor, Egypt or Greece. What confusion have the Phœnicians not made ! After manufacturing for themselves hybrid divinities, they have spread their worship over the globe, and it has sometimes come back, thus travestied, to the country of its origin, where it has been received anew.¹⁶ M. Perrot in his great work on the history of art has well defined the results of this blind and fruitful activity : “ Pendant plusieurs siècles, dans les ateliers de Tyr, de Sidon, de Byblos et d’Arad, on a fabriqué pour l’exportation du faux Egyptien auquel on a mêlé quelques éléments empruntés à l’Assyrie, et ces produits d’un éclectisme tout industriel ont trouvé leur débit assuré sur les côtes de la Méditerranée.”¹⁷

In reality, if we follow the Phœnicians to their various stations from Kypros to Sardinia, we find there the results of the ideas which they propagated. Kourion and Salamis have given many cylinders whose subjects are borrowed from Assyria and Asia Minor, and from the necropolis of Tharros have come seals in the form of scarabs, whose motifs are due to Egypt and Assyria.

This forging art was, however, the national art of Phœnicia, and its manifestations should be studied with all the greater care that their incoherence characterizes the entire life of the people. But now comes the most delicate part, for this forging art has in its turn been the subject of forgeries. These forgeries in the second dilution are more difficult to recognize. The forger knows how to make use of the confusion to which these works lend themselves. I have already remarked how easy it is to detect frauds when they imitate the products of an art of well-marked originality : this becomes less easy at periods of transition, when various elements are confounded : but how can they be detected when the forger imitates a forgery ?

J. MÉNANT.

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¹⁶ This is what M. Heuzey has so well called *l’action en retour*. See: *Catalogue du Musée du Louvre*, p. 84.

¹⁷ PERROT et CHAPIEZ, *Histoire de l’Art*, t. III, p. 76.



No. 1.



No. 2.



No. 3.



No. 4.



No. 5.